



A Message from Gus

Whew! What a year!

The budget came late. The fund distribution was not what we were anticipating. The rules for TSP and EQIP took longer than we'd imagined. Things kept changing while we were working on them. CRP acceptance came awfully late and we had to scramble to get the contracts written. We seemed to be operating at the edge of chaos for most of the year. But we survived!

We got a lot of good conservation planned in the process. According to my numbers, we managed to contract just under \$22 million in about six weeks. Well done! Very well done!

I am very proud of the NRCS folks in this state. I also want to thank our partners in the conservation districts. We couldn't have done it without them. Working under a great deal of stress and pressure, we got the job done.

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While I sincerely hope FY04 isn't quite as crazy as 03, I think we need to accept the fact that this rapid rate of change will be with us for the foreseeable future. We are living in a time where certainty is rare. We won't always have the final rules. We won't always have specific guidance. We won't always have full policy. We'll have to make our best decisions based on the limited information before us. And then we'll move on.

So take a couple deep breaths. Spend some time celebrating your accomplishments from FY03. And get ready to take on the challenges of 04. After all, somebody is going to have to apply all that good stuff we got contracted in the last couple months.

You did great!

iCAMS PASSWORD REMINDER

Human Resources has received *over 75 requests in the last 3 weeks alone* to issue, re-set, or unlock iCAMS and/or TCAS passwords! Here is some basic information about your passwords. Please, please, please follow password instructions, keep track of what your current password(s) are, and call only after you have reviewed all guidance and still cannot get into the system!

Here are some helpful hints:

- Although your login ID is the same for both systems, your password(s) for iCAMS and Web TCAS are not the same unless you changed them to be the same. If you change one password and do not change the other to match, please keep track of which is which.
- Passwords for both systems must have:
 - Minimum of 8 characters
 - At least 1 characters must be numbers
 - At least 1 character must be a special character (!,?, @, #, \$, %., etc.)
 - A mix of upper and lower case
 - Cannot contain a known word
- Passwords expire every 90 days. User will receive a prompt 21 days before password expiration. *Make sure you access both WebTCAS and iCAMS regularly so you can get your expiration notices/password prompts.*
- Employees should set up a password hint for each system (iCAMS and WebTCAS). Both systems have a 'Forgot Password' function that lets you generate a new password if you forgot your current one, but this function only works if you have established a password hint.
- Users will be locked out of iCAMS and WebTCAS after 5 unsuccessful login attempts. If you have tried 3 or more times, log completely out of the system, wait at least a half hour, then try again, using the 'Forgot Password' function if necessary.
- Sometimes a user can't access the system because of computer problems, not password problems. If you think you have the correct password but you're having trouble getting in to the system, check and see if others in the office are also having problems, or try logging in from someone else's machine. You may actually be experiencing an IT problem, not a password problem.
- If all of the above fails, users who can't get into WebTCAS should email helpdesk@helpdesk.itc.nrcs.usda.gov for assistance.
- If all of the above fails, users who can't get into iCAMS should contact Human Resources to get their iCAMS account unlocked.
- Re-issuing a password can take several days. Do not wait until the deadline date to access systems and/or change passwords!

Our security and password controls are mandated by and in compliance with the USDA Security Regulations. While some of the requirements may seem cumbersome, please keep in mind that these systems contain personal information; it is in all of our interests to follow password controls and protect this data.

Personnel Actions

Welcome

Cheryle Miller, Human Resources Officer, Spokane State Office, transferring from Bureau of Reclamation, Billings, Montana, effective 11/2/03

Promotions

Kyle Moore, Rangeland Management Specialist, Okanogan Field Office, effective 8/10/03.

Leigh Nelson, promoted to State Civil Engineer/Irrigation Engineer, Central Area Office, effective 8/24/03.

June Johnson, promotion to Resource Conservationist (CST), Spokane State Office, effective 11/2/03.

Ann Swannack, promotion to East Area Agronomist, located in Colfax, effective 11/2/03.

Sally Bredeweg, promotion to State Civil Engineer/Design Engineer, Spokane State Office, effective 12/28/03.

Reassignments

Erik Dahlke, reassigned to Mt. Vernon from Maine as a Career Intern Soil Scientist, effective 9/7/03 and was promoted effective 9/21/03.

Marty Chaney, reassigned as West Area Agronomist, effective 8/10/03.

Misty Seaboldt, Student Trainee (Forestry), reassigned to the Plant Material Center, effective 8/24/03.

Valerie Fuchs, Student Trainee (Engineering), reassigned to Spokane State Office, effective 9/7/03.

Jessie Ham, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist), reassigned to the Puyallup Field Office, effective 9/21/03.

Kelly Sprute, reassigned as Public Affairs Specialist, West Area Office, effective 11/2/03.

Jerry Beemer, reassigned to the Soil Conservation Technician, Goldendale Field Office, effective 11/2/03.

Ken Drecksel, reassigned to Area Resource Soil Scientist, Central Area Office, effective 11/16/03.

Name Change

Cassandra Hiller, Student Trainee (Soil Conservationist), Mount Vernon, name change to Cassandra McKinney, effective August 24, 2003.

Best of Luck

Mary Johnson, Secretary, Spokane State Office, resigned effective 8/24/03.

Jeremy Kleinsmith, Biological Science Aid (Plants), Plant Material Center, resigned effective 8/16/03.

John Wandschneider, Biological Science Aid (Plants), Plant Material Center, resigned effective 8/16/03.

Heather Trusty, Biological Science Aid (Plants), Plant Material Center, resigned effective, 9/6/03.

Danielle Rohde, Biological Science Aid (Plants), Plant Material Center, resigned effective, 9/23/03.



Quality Steering Team – Report from the Chair

A new Quality Steering Team (QST) has been appointed and is ready to tackle some new issues. Our thanks go out to the previous team for all their hard work and success, especially through the reorganization process. Membership on the team is based on our new NRCS organizational structure with a representative from each area, one from the state office and one each from the Washington Association of Conservation Districts and the Washington Soil Conservation Commission. Current members include:

- Dave Brown, ARC, Spokane Area Office, East Area Rep. and Chair
- Roger Briggs, SC, Ephrata Field Office, Central Area Rep.
- Jeff Swotek, RC, Olympia Field Office, West Area Rep.
- Betty Schmitt, PAO, Spokane State Office, SO Rep.
- Chris Mahelona, Spokane CD Supervisor, WACD Rep.
- Bill Broughton, East Field Operations Mgr, WSCC Rep.

In July, past and current members participated in a teleconference to get the new team started. Gus Hughbanks also participated and provide the group his vision for the QST. He included the following points:

- The QST is another communication conduit for staff to carry issues to the State Leadership Team (SLT).
- Staff may feel more at ease communicating through a QST representative.
- The QST members are the "eyes and ears" for the SLT, identifying and bringing forth issues that need to be addressed.
- The QST has the opportunity to capture ideas for streamlining NRCS operations from NRCS and the Conservation Partnership.

In August the QST got together for our first face-to-face meeting. The team took time to share their thoughts on the role of the QST and what we thought we would like to accomplish over the next couple of years. After that we got down to the business of reviewing some current issues and items. Over the next couple of months the team will be working on:

- Developing a clear mission statement for the QST
- A plan to insure that employees and partners understand the role of the QST.
- Getting feedback from employees and partners on current issues or problems.
- Evaluating the Voice-Com/Voice Mail systems in use and making recommendations for improvements.

The QST will be meeting once every month or so. If you have other issues or concerns you feel could be addressed by the QST, please feel free to contact your representative.

Upper Columbia RC&D Update

Submitted by Chad Dunnahoo, RC&D Coordinator

The Upper Columbia Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) program is alive, back on track and moving forward. After an extended period of inactivity, the RC&D elected a new executive board from a pool of representatives from Ferry, Pend Oreille, Spokane and Whitman counties. The Executive Board was elected in April 2003 and they quickly moved forward by adopting a new set of bylaws, developing an annual plan and implementing a recruiting plan to increase sponsorship.

The Council has also accepted two new projects this year; a Wetland Boardwalk in Pend Oreille County, and a Water Quality Education Project in Whitman County. The Wetland Boardwalk is for the Boy Scouts Camp Cowles, located on Diamond Lake. The Boardwalk is replacing one that was installed years ago by Boy Scouts but is slowly disappearing underwater and is no longer used.

A local engineer is volunteering his professional services to design the Boardwalk and the scouts will be involved in the installation. The Boardwalk will be used by the scouts to observe and learn about wetland wildlife which will also enable them to complete requirements for environmental, wildlife and fishery science projects. Area schools will be able to use this structure for educational field trips and projects. The RC&D also involved the Newport NRCS Field Office in the development of a conservation plan for the Camp, which consists of approximately 900 acres of forestland. The project completion date is scheduled for October 2004.

The Water Quality Education Project for Whitman County is in the very early stages of development. The project will be focused on grades 3-8, and will encourage children to become aware of agriculture conservation methods and water quality through demonstrations and classroom instruction. This will help children understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining good water quality.

The Upper Columbia RC&D Council meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of each month and all are welcome to attend. For location of monthly meetings, contact the Upper Columbia RC&D Office at (509) 353-2916.

Salmon in the Classroom

Submitted by Barbara Bolick, Resource Conservationist, Prosser

If you had visited Horn Rapids Park in Benton County on May 7, 2003, you would have observed an activity which Benton Conservation District (BCD) and local NRCS employees call "salmon dipping." This is when they use a small dipping net to chase salmon fry around a container, trying to capture just one.

Salmon dipping is part of a celebration during the last day of BCD's "Salmon in the Classroom" project in local elementary schools. This project began with a grant from the Department of Ecology in 2000, with 50-gallon tanks in three schools. Still supported by grants, BCD has a total of fifteen tanks.

The students watched eggs delivered in January (donated by the Yakama Fish Hatchery in Prosser) develop into the small fry that arrive to the Park in coolers and buckets on release day. Children line up with paper cups half full of river water and each receive one fish to release into the river. Some are sad to see their fish go; others are excited that the fry will continue to be part of the salmon life cycle they have learned about.

The teachers have been able to incorporate the salmon into nearly every subject they teach. Determining the percent of survivors from the original eggs, following the route fish will take to the ocean on a map and writing a story about what they would see if they were salmon, are examples of how the project can be used in classrooms.

Tim Kopf of BCD goes to the schools and discusses the life cycle and habitat needs of the fish and how protecting natural resources increases the chance of fish population to maintain or expand. He takes a watershed display to the classes where they can see how streams might become polluted and practices that can be applied by landowners to help improve the environment.

The release day has expanded due to the efforts of Kopf. The field day includes representatives of many agencies, tribal members, college students, professional societies and private industry. They manned stations around the Park, presenting live raptors that are being rehabilitated (WSU Raptor Club), leading students on small hikes to observe native plants in the area (Native Plant Society), speaking of the importance of salmon to the Yakama's culture, telling traditional animal stories (Yakama tribal members); and describing the habitat of salmon that travel the Yakima and Columbia Rivers to the ocean (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife).

The cooperative efforts of agencies, professional societies and schools has resulted in a successful and fun way for children to learn about natural resources and the importance of protecting them.

WATER FORECASTING



A new SNOTEL, snow telemetry, a remote, automated, water forecasting system, has been installed in Ferry County. Following a presentation given by Scott Pattee, WA NRCS Hydrologic Technician, Ferry County Commissioners and the Kettle River Advisory Board (KRAB) made a request to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to install a SNOTEL system in the mountains above Curlew, Washington. These groups recognized that successful water management begins with an adequate knowledge of the primary source of water in the West-snow. Funding for the project came from the KRAB, through private donations, and from the Ferry County Commissioners, through Title III funding.

A typical SNOTEL site consists of measuring devices and sensors, a shelter to house the radio telemetry equipment, and an antenna that transmits, receives and also supports the solar panels that keeps the batteries charged.

NRCS/SCS has been monitoring snow depth and snow moisture content on the Summit manual snow course since 1960. This automated system will provide additional water forecasting information for the Kettle River Watershed. The Sentinel Butte site in Ferry County monitors minimum and maximum daily air temperature, soil temperature, moisture, and conductivity, cumulative precipitation, snow depth and snow moisture. All these parameters are measured automatically every 15 minutes and transmitted hourly.



Pictured is the work party of NRCS employees and Ferry County residents. The facility took two full days of manual labor to install. Pictured is Brad Duda, Ferry CD, Dennis Snook, Ferry County Commissioner. NRCS employees from WA and Oregon, Liz Arden, Dave Kreft, Melissa Clark, Sheila Strachan, Larry Johnson, Bill Overman, Scott Pattee, Larry Cooke, and Adam Mazurkiewicz. Not pictured, Patrice Beckwith and Doug Rochester.

The following week, the Kettle River Advisory Board and the Ferry County Commissioners held a dedication ceremony. Several board members, citizens and USFS staff attended. Donna Beal, long time KRAB member, gave a brief history of the group's efforts in establishing this SNOTEL site. Resource Conservationist, Patrice Beckwith, reviewed the technical aspects of the measuring and transmission devices.

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Water Forecasting continued

Local US Forest Service employee, Keith Wakefield is excited. "I can use this real time information to plan work projects such as grooming cross country ski trails. That way I won't waste my time if the conditions are not conducive to grooming."

Through long term planning and a local agreement with Ferry County, KRAB, the NRCS, and the USFS this "high tech" site was made a reality. Scott Pattee, WA NRCS Hydrologic Technician said, "The information this installation will gather will fill a gap in the lack of water forecasting sites in NE Washington. "This is a dream come true for us," said Donna Beal, KRAB member and past chairperson.

TWO YEARS TO A FARM

A Typical Planning Unit for Kitsap County of the Olympic Peninsula Team

By Martha Blair Kitsap Conservation District & Ken Drecksal NRCS

When Larry and Gail Carlson purchased a 2.5 acre parcel of property in the Burley Lagoon watershed in September of 2001, they had big plans to establish a new farm that would support their two horses. The property had been recently converted from woodland, and had not been previously used for livestock. It was clear that a lot of hard work lay ahead in order to make their dream a reality.

The Carlsons immediately set to work on barn construction and a pasture planting in Fall 2001. It was around this time that they heard about the Kitsap Conservation District and the technical assistance programs that are offered through the district and NRCS. During an initial site visit we talked about their goals for their new farm, which included pasture productivity, rotational grazing, and composting manure. They became aware of the water quality concerns in Burley Lagoon and the importance of establishing best farm management practices that would help prevent water quality problems. The District set to work on a farm management plan specific to the site.

Once the barn was completed, the Carlsons evaluated what additional projects would be needed in order to bring livestock on the property in June 2002. They decided to apply for cost-share assistance through the District to implement a roof runoff management system on the barn and heavy use area protection and fencing for the paddocks adjacent to the barn. This cost-share program offered 50% cost-share for project materials. The Carlsons also created an outdoor arena and installed perimeter-pasture fencing and cross fencing at their own expense.

Additional improvements were made to the farm in Spring of 2003, including a Waste Storage Facility with a concrete floor and 4-ft high wood walls, used for composting manure. Cost-share funds were received for implementation of this project, which included landowner labor reimbursement for hours spent constructing the facility.

Two Years to a Farm... continued on page 9

Two Years to a Farm...continued

When you step foot on the Carlson's property today, you see productive pastures, livestock being rotationally grazed, and a functioning waste management system - all of which were goals from the beginning of the farm planning process. Two years of farm planning, project implementation and much hard work has resulted in a small, well-managed farm with minimal impact on the surface water quality in the Burley area.



Developing New Technology from the Ground Up *By Valerie Oksendahl, State Agronomist*

In September, Charles Lander, NRCS National Agronomist, participated in a direct seeding tour that encompassed the Camas Prairie to the Palouse. This tour covered various landscapes, soil types and rainfall zones. Dave Lightle and Glenn Weesies with the National Soil Survey Center, Jerry Lemunyon, Nutrient Management Specialist of Texas, Valerie Oksendahl, Washington State Agronomist, Ralph Fisher, Idaho State Agronomist, Don McCool, ARS, Dennis Roe, Tri-State Team Leader and representatives of the Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association (PNDSA) also participated in the tour.

The substance of the gathering was the development of conservation programs based on a cropping systems approach rather than individual practices. PNDSA advocated that four elements - soil disturbance, residue management, crop rotation and pest and nutrient management should all be included when using the direct seed approach.

The first stop on the Idaho tour was the Kurt Blume farm at Genesee, where the group looked at the challenges inherent in managing high residue from 100 bushel wheat. The Russ Zenner farm provided an opportunity to look at drill modifications necessary to fit the steep Palouse Hills of Idaho. At Lawai, the group reviewed the Nez Pierce Tribe's conservation issues, including grant opportunities the Tribe has provided to their members to encourage direct seeding. Dick Wittman discussed crop diversity, precision farming, weed control challenges and economic considerations important to a systems approach.

Developing New Technology...continued on page 10

Developing New Technology...continued



Don McCool, Chuck Lander, Jerry Lemunyon, and Dennis Roe collecting samples from soil profile dug on Aeschliman's corn field.

The second day began with a breakfast meeting and policy discussion in Lewiston followed by a trip to the John Aeschliman farm near Colfax Washington where the steep topography, watershed and sustainable systems for handling erosion were on the agenda. The last stop was the Mike Stubbs farm near Dusty, Washington where Stubbs discussed direct seeding and the group viewed the modifications installed on his direct seed equipment.



Mark Sheffels holds a handful of earthworms that were extracted from the top of a hill on the Aeschliman farm..



Motivating With Recognition

Recognition is critical to successful retention of our volunteers. The type of recognition should be matched to the individual. Volunteers' "pay" to a large extent, is recognition and assurance that they are equal partners of the NRCS team. Your Area Coordinator has items such as mugs, shirts, etc. available. You might also try:

- ✦ Expressing sincere appreciation
- ✦ A note of thanks after a difficult day
- ✦ A birthday card
- ✦ Public recognition in Current Developments newsletter
- ✦ Pictures of volunteer activities on a bulletin board for all to see
- ✦ Positive feedback from clients
- ✦ Coffee breaks with staff
- ✦ Giving credit for the success of a project at staff meetings
- ✦ A Volunteer of the Month/Year award

Identity Security Precautions

A corporate attorney sent the following to employees in his company:

The next time you order checks, have only your initials (instead of first name) and last name put on them. If someone takes your checkbook, they will not know if you sign your checks with just your initials or your first name, but your bank will know how you sign your checks.

When you are writing checks to pay on your credit card accounts, DO NOT put the complete account number on the "For" line. Instead, just put the last four numbers. The credit card company knows the rest of the number, and anyone who might be handling your check as it passes through all the check processing channels won't have access to it.

Put your work phone number on your checks instead of your home phone. If you have a P.O. Box, use that instead of your home address. NEVER have your social security number printed on your checks! You can add it if necessary, but if you have it printed, anyone can get it.

Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine. Do both sides of each license, credit card, etc. You will know what you had in your wallet and all of the account numbers and phone numbers to call and cancel. Keep the photocopy in a safe place.

We've all heard horror stories about fraud that's committed on us in stealing a name, address, social security number, credit cards, etc. Unfortunately, I, an attorney, have first-hand knowledge, because my wallet was stolen last month. Within a week, the thief(s) ordered an expensive monthly cell phone package, applied for a credit card, had a credit line approved to buy a computer, received a PIN number from DMV to change my driving record information online, and more.

Here is some critical information to limit the damage in case this happens to you or someone you know. We have been told we should cancel our credit cards immediately. But the key is having the toll free numbers and your card numbers handy so you know whom to call. Keep those where you can find them easily.

File a police report immediately in the jurisdiction where it was stolen. This proves to credit providers you were diligent, and is a first step toward an investigation (if there ever is one).

But, here's what is perhaps most important: Call the three national credit reporting organizations immediately to place a fraud alert on your name and social security number. I had never heard of doing that until advised by a bank that called to tell me an application for credit was made over the Internet in my name. The alert means any company that checks your credit knows your information was stolen and they have to contact you by phone to authorize new credit. By the time I was advised to do this - almost two weeks after the theft - all the damage had been done.

There are records of all credit checks initiated by the thieves' purchases, none of which I knew about before placing the alert. Since then, no additional damage has been done, and the thieves threw my wallet away this weekend (someone turned it in). It seems to have stopped them in their tracks.

The numbers are:

Equifax: 1 (800) 525-6285

Experian (formerly TRW): 1 (888) 397-3742

Trans Union: 1 (800) 680-7289

Social Security Administration Fraud Line: 1 (800) 269-0271

U.S. DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
Natural Resources Conservation Service
316 W. Boone Avenue, Suite 450
Spokane, Washington 99201-2348